



**Title:** Make Me a Criminal: Preventing Youth Crime

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**SCS topic headings:** Safety of Vulnerable Groups, Offending Management; Community Engagement

**The details presented here evaluate only Section 7 (What works? Proven Effective Interventions; pp. 48-57) of the report 'Make Me a Criminal: Preventing Youth Crime' by Margo, J. and Stevens, A. This Section 7 is a REVIEW of effective intervention approaches.**

#### **Summary of the intervention's aim**

This report makes the case for a more therapeutic and family based approach to youth offending as opposed to the [circa 2008] 'more punitive' system. The authors' perception that interventions operate through universal approaches (primary approaches that aim to prevent crime before it occurs) and approaches focused on individuals at the highest risk of offending (secondary preventions) structures section 7 of this document's discussion. Evidence from across Europe regarding both successful and unsuccessful approaches to youth offending is presented.

#### **Outcomes**

Section 7 of this report presents evidence from across Europe as to both successful and unsuccessful approaches to youth offending. Interventions with a focus on parenting, schools, communities and situational crime prevention (including ASBOs) are detailed.

The authors consider that crime prevention programmes operate at two different levels:

1. **Primary prevention** is attempted through universal approaches that aim to prevent crime before it occurs. Based on a European evidence base **promising** youth offending approaches at the primary prevention level include:

- Parenting programmes
- Early intervention pre-school and day-care programmes
- After-school activities

Again based on European evidence, **ineffective** youth offending approaches at the primary prevention level appear to include:

- ASBOs
- Juvenile curfews
- Probations
- Boot camps
- ‘Scared Straight’ programmes

2. **Secondary prevention** approaches are focused on individuals at the highest risk of offending. At this level **promising** youth offending approaches appear to include:

- Therapeutic interventions
- Holistic family interventions

Furthermore the report’s content covers the following headings:

How do policy and attitudes need to change?

Approaches to tackling youth offending

Impacts of social change

Risk factors for children to offend

Raising children: influence of familial and social context

Recommendations

#### *Primary prevention*

1. Tackling child poverty and in-work poverty
2. Better support for families: towards a worker/carer model
3. Protecting children: banning corporal punishment
4. Better provision of activities for 12- to 18-year-olds
5. Supervised play areas
6. Supporting collective efficacy
7. Welfare teams in primary schools

#### *Secondary prevention*

8. Sure Start Plus: a targeted approach for at-risk 5-12s and touching hard-to-reach groups
9. Reform of ASBO legislation
10. Outreach schools and Decriminalising children

## Summary of evaluation conclusions

This paper argues that:

- **Primary-level**, universal strategies must improve the capacity of communities including families, local community, schools, early years education and youth activities to socialise norms of behaviour and respect for communities. This is particularly important in light of social change affecting these institutions.

At the primary level of prevention, problems exist at the family and community level – partly because social change has undermined the time spent between adults (and parents) and young people, and because engagement in communities is, on the whole, less constructive.

Schools are also unable to adequately socialise the most-at-risk because children and young people tend only to come into contact with welfare support when already displaying serious risk factors such as truancy.

The most 'at risk' (in this case, excluded pupils) are inadequately supported, even though these are the children and young people most likely to commit crime, breach an order or end up in court.

- **Secondary-level**, targeted strategies must improve the capacity of social services, health services and specialist programmes to both reach and improve the behaviour of the most-at-risk groups, such as those committing anti-social behaviour, showing emotional problems, or having problems at school.

Secondary-level programmes do not seem to reach the most-at-risk often enough, and are not always based on the real evidence of what works in diverting at-risk young people away from crime. There is not enough joined-up service provision.

## How the evaluation gathered information for findings and conclusions

This report uses data from both statistics and information gathered from interviews undertaken for the report. The authors also use material from a range of academic journals, scholarly publications, organisational and government reports.

**Further details about the SCS evaluation of this report are available on request.**

**Date added to the SCS website: June 2010 (RC)**